

Tennessee Council for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, & Hard of Hearing



June 2013 - July 2014 Report

**Tennessee Department of Human Services
Division of Rehabilitation Services
400 Deaderick Street
Nashville, TN 37243**

Tennessee Code Annotated 74-4-2102. An ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 71, Chapter 4, Part 21, relative to the council for the deaf and hard of hearing was enacted by the Tennessee General Assembly and signed by Governor Bill Haslam on May 20, 2013. The act changed the name to the Tennessee Council for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing (TCDDDBHH). The act also expanded the council to eighteen members. The Council is located within the Tennessee Department of Human Services and is a part of the Division of Rehabilitation Services.

Our Mission

The Tennessee Council for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing exists to serve as an advocate for culturally appropriate services affecting Deaf, Hard of Hearing and deaf blind persons through coordination, public awareness, and consultation and education in areas of public service, health care, education, and employment.

Responsibilities

The Tennessee Council for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing has the statutory responsibility to:

1. Advocate services affecting people who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing in the areas of public services, health care, education, vocational training, employment opportunity, emergency services, resource sharing, and communication;
2. Act as a bureau of information for people who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing to state agencies and public institutions providing health care, employment, vocational, educational services, resource sharing, and emergency services to the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing, and to local agencies and programs;
3. Collect facts and statistics and other special studies of conditions affecting the health and welfare of people who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing in this state;
4. Provide for a mutual exchange of ideas and information on the national, state, and local levels;
5. Encourage and assist local governments and agencies in the development of programs for people who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing;
6. Cooperate with public and private agencies and units of local, state, and federal governments in promoting coordination in programs for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing;
7. As part of the duties of the Executive Director for the Council, he prepares an Annual Report of activities to the Council for approval which is then submitted to the General Assembly. In 2013, the Council did not have an organized meeting

due to budget restructuring and the transitioning of the Executive Director to a new position which resulted in the untimeliness of the Annual Report submission. In 2014, legislation was passed to expand the role of advocacy within the council to the deaf-blind population. During the adaption of the new council configuration, which increased the number of council members from twelve to eighteen, the annual plan for 2014 is being combined with the 2013 report.

8. Make recommendations for needed improvements and to serve as an advisory body in regard to new legislation affecting the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing.

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Major Activities

The Council was involved in a number of activities during the last fiscal year. They included:

- Promoting hearing aid insurance legislation
- Promoting mental health services for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind
- Promoting suicide prevention for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind
- Promoting awareness of this population's special needs to the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency
- Provided organizational support for the Southeast Regional Institute on Deafness (SERID) Conference in Chattanooga. 325 attended and had 37 workshops and 3 plenary speakers. The conference annually trains individuals on deafness and vocational rehabilitation issues.
- Providing information regarding financial assistance for hearing aids
- Providing information regarding telecommunication equipment
- Providing information regarding interpreting services in Tennessee
- Providing information regarding legal rights of the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind
- Providing technical support and resource information to Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors serving the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- Provided guidance and support to an emergency awareness association benefitting the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf-Blind, and Late-Deafened population
- Supporting Deaf Awareness Activities across Tennessee
- Conducted several meetings with directors of these community centers for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind regarding a shift of focus of services that can be provided with their state contracts
- TCDHH held council meetings in August and November 2012. Due to the restriction of funding only allowing for direct services to the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program, funding for the remaining two council meetings for the fiscal year were eliminated.

- In the spring of 2013, a piece of legislation was unanimously passed in both the State Senate and House that revamped the council. The membership increased from 11 to 18 members to be more inclusive of other State Departments and Community groups and changed the name to the Tennessee Council for the Deaf Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing. This piece of legislation was signed into law by Governor Haslam on May 20, 2013 and became effective on July 1, 2013. Unmatched State Funding was found to operate the council and to pay the State Employees who organize it.

Community Centers for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

The Division of Rehabilitation Services provides funding for Community Centers for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Johnson City, Knoxville, Chattanooga, Nashville, Jackson, and Memphis. These Community Centers report to the Council during quarterly meetings and submit their statistical data to the Executive Director of TCDHH who compiles it for the Division. In Fiscal Year 2013, the Division of Rehabilitation Services only funded these community centers for three months (July – September). A “Fee for Service” contract was offered to each center for the remainder of the fiscal year to serve approved Vocational Rehabilitation Service clients. None of the six community centers provided services under this second contract. The Division provided \$225,000.00 in funding in performance based contracts for these six (6) regional community centers.

The following statistics demonstrate the wide array of VR Supporting services provided by the six centers (July – September 2012):

• Employer Training	51
• Pre-Employment Training	37
• VR Counselor Training	11
• Technology Training	48
• Independent Living Training	119
• Sign Language Classes	28
• Interpreter Training	9
• Coordination of Interpreting Services	970
• Unpaid Interpreting Services	93
• In Service Training	5
• Information & Referral	314
• Deaf Awareness Activities	46
• Public Relations	25

Membership

Members are appointed to the Council by the Governor and serve voluntarily without compensation. Most seats on the Council are mandated by statute. The current members of the Council are:

Michael Friedman	Tennessee Association of the Deaf (Central)	Chattanooga
Dana Hughes	Tennessee Association of the Deaf (President)	Knoxville
Randy Chappell	Tennessee Registry of Interpreters f/t Deaf	Bartlett
Alan Mealka	Tennessee Dept. of Education (School f/t Deaf)	Knoxville

Paulette Melton
Margie Ulrich
Lordy Smith
Cherrell Campbell-Street
Deborah Harris
Kate Kanies
Janie Neal

Tennessee Department of Human Services
Consumer Representative (Audiologist)
Tennessee Association of the Deaf (West)
Tennessee Division of Rehabilitation Services
Consumer Representative (Educator of the Deaf)
Tennessee Department of Mental Health
Tennessee Association of the Deaf (East)

Lexington
Chattanooga
Memphis
Nashville
Memphis
Nashville

July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014 Report

Major Activities

- *The Council provided TTY and Relay training.*
- *The Council assisted with Vocational Rehabilitation Services to propose an update to their interpreter policy.*
- *The Council assisted Walk4Hearing with raising money for hearing aids and hearing screenings for the underprivileged.*
- *The Council was active influencing suicide prevention policies and activities.*
- *The Council helped to coordinate the Emergency Awareness and Resource Services (EARS) Weather Spotting Symposium for the Deaf and distributed weather alert radios that were purchased by Metro Nashville Health Department.*
- *The Council met several times with those who are drafting a bill to create a licensing board for sign language interpreters.*
- *The Council supported Well Fest which provides free general health screening mainly for those who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind.*
- *The Council supported the need for accommodations in educational settings.*
- *The Council supported the need for special training with law enforcement and Deaf Child Abuse.*
- *The Council supported the need to improve mental health and substance abuse services for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing.*
- *The Council supported the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program.*
- *Poppy Steele, Executive Director with The Sign Club Company, presented to the Council on the high percentage of abuse (sexual and physical) among deaf children and the need for interpreters being present with the first responders.*

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- Interpreting services
- Information and referral
- Peer counseling
- Help in accessing community services

The following statistics demonstrate the wide array of services provided by the six centers:

Service contacts of Deaf/DB/HH	23,310
Coordination of Interpreting Services	19,047
Units of Technical Assistance Provided to Employers	416
Units of Independent Living Skills Taught	864
Sign Language or Speech Reading Training	466
Workshop/Seminar Hours on Deafness	645.50
Outreach and Referral	2,045

Membership

Members are appointed to the Council by the Governor and serve voluntarily without compensation. Most seats on the Council are mandated by statute. The current members of the Council are:

Paul Robertson, Jr.	Tennessee Association of the Deaf
Monique Brazelton	Tennessee Regulatory Authority
Cherrell Campbell-Street	Tennessee Division of Rehabilitation Services
Brenda Sellars	Tennessee Registry of Interpreters f/t Deaf
Alan Mealka	Tennessee School for the Deaf
Patti Bell-Norris	Tennessee Department of Human Services
Philip Yater	Consumer Representative
Gay Nelson	Consumer Representative
Tony Decha-Umphai	Consumer Representative
Bob Geldreich	Consumer Representative
Alex King	Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse
Kate Driskill	Hearing Loss Association of America
Janie Neal	Consumer Representative
Jacque Cundall	Tennessee Department of Health
James Bassham	Tennessee Hands and Voices
Larry Godwin	Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security
Robert Baldwin	Consumer Representative

TCDDDBHH Statewide Needs

1. Mental Health provision is needed for those who are deaf and deaf-blind. Currently there are no facilities which provide mental and behavioral health services geared to these communities. TCDDDBHH assisted to form the Tennesseans for Behavioral Health Accessibility affiliation with Disability Law and Advocacy Center and the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. Strategies have been discussed and a survey has been developed to get more specific input from these communities for data reporting purposes. Once there are numbers gathered, TDMHSAS will then analyze what the next step will be.
2. More qualified professional sign language interpreters are needed. Currently, Tennessee does not have a requirement for these interpreters to maintain any type of license for quality/professional verification. TCDDDBHH has made recommendations for needed improvements as an advisory body in drafting appropriate language for a proposed bill which will not be introduced during the upcoming legislature term. Various communities were represented: Deaf, Deaf-Blind, Hard of Hearing, Agency Interpreters, Independent Interpreters, Parents, and Hearing consumers. During 2014, this group has been carefully analyzing what other states have done to use as templates for Tennessee.
3. Early Alerting Devices and Severe Weather Spotting Classes are needed for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind. TCDDDBHH helped to develop the Emergency Awareness and Readiness Services (EARS) back in 2008. This group has been very active in training weather spotters, holding First Aid courses, and providing much needed alerting devices such as weather alerts, visual smoke detectors, and the like. Alliances with the National Weather Bureau, FEMA/TEMA, and Bridges. An upcoming training on weather and fire safety will take place in December.